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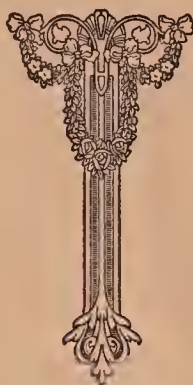
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Student Guide Number 1

For Elbert Moore's Course
of Instruction and
Criticism In

Writing The
Photoplay



Elbert Moore

Chicago

Collected set,

MY COURSE OF INSTRUCTION AND CRITICISM IN WRITING THE PHOTOPLAY is based on the most scientific educational principles, and is closely in accord with the method used in the leading universities of the world. It is of *university grade*, and is *authoritative* in every particular.

1. My Text-Book covers every branch of photoplay writing clearly and concisely. It follows the model of the best text books now in use in *any* subject, and is equally thorough and comprehensive.

2. My Screen Talks, bring to the COURSE the specialized knowledge of *experts*. They provide the varied viewpoint which is so important in any scientifically prepared course, and correspond to the "outside reading" which is usually required in university courses.

3. My Student Guides, of which this is the first, direct your reading in the COURSE and your recitations in the same way that an instructor would do in a university course.

4. Your recitations and photoplays then come to me for personal criticism, correction and grading just as they would to the university instructor, with the added advantage to you that you are *in a class by yourself* and can proceed as rapidly as you wish.

The above four features of my COURSE are educationally correct. They are at the foundation of all intelligently planned instruction throughout the civilized world. No one of them can be slighted without endangering your success.

To read the Text-Book and Screen Talks alone, without benefiting from the personal attention and criticism which I am prepared to give you, would surely result in your falling into certain bad habits and errors which might never be corrected. On the other hand, to recite to me and obtain my criticism and advice, without studying the Text Book and Screen Talks would be to waste much of your *own* time and mine, and would greatly delay your progress.

You will obtain the best results by reading the Text Book and Screen Talks carefully as directed, and by obtaining the full benefit of my thorough and conscientious criticism.

The COURSE is planned so that you can master it easily and quickly. Do not slight it, however, or try to proceed too rapidly.

Before you even consider sending away a scenario for sale *learn the first steps thoroughly*. Learn what the photoplay *means* and *is*. Learn what the producers and the public want. Genius has been well defined as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." The men and women who succeed, plan their course intelligently, and then follow it systematically and perseveringly.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT FOR STUDY AND RECITATION

Read Carefully the first four chapters of the *Text Book*. They are,

- I. WHAT A PHOTOPLAY IS.
- II. THE PROFESSION OF SCENARIO WRITING.
- III. THE IMPORTANCE OF PLOTS.
- IV. HOW TO GET IDEAS FOR PLOTS.

For the present we are going to pay *particular attention* to the first two chapters, as chapters three and four will be taken up in detail in the next assignment. You will find a set of questions at the end of the first chapter. After reading the chapter through carefully, ask yourself these questions, and see if you can remember the information in the chapter which answers them. If you cannot answer them, ask me to explain them to you.

At the back of the *Text Book* you will find a glossary of the studio terms used in connection with the writing and producing of photoplays. Refer to this glossary for any terms which you may come across in your reading which puzzle you. It is very complete, but if by chance there should be something that it does not cover, ask about it in your recitation.

The most important subject discussed in Chapter II is the *need for originality*. The photoplay writer cannot hope to gain success through copying the work of others. He must study life and people continuously, and with understanding. Half hearted effort never leads anywhere but to disappointment. The writers who are mentioned in this chapter as having made a success, have done so by means of the diligence with which they applied themselves to their work. It is by means of continuous practice, and enthusiastic work, that the author will gain real achievement.

After reading the chapters in the *Text Book*, take up the two *Screen Talks*, and read first:

THE PHOTOPLAY AS A REFLECTION OF LIFE, by Richard Henry Little.

This is a most valuable discussion. It gives you, at the very start, a conception of the vital and fundamental principles which have made the success of the photoplay and tells how you can use them in your work.

Realistic character work is an important factor, and we will take up character drawing to a greater extent in later lessons. It is best, however, for you to begin to look at character study in a rational and modern manner from the very first and this Screen Talk is admirably suited to start you in the right direction.

Next, read the *Screen Talk*, PRACTICAL STUDY AT THEATRES, by Mr. A. M. Gollos. Note particularly what this Screen Talk has to say about *visualization*. Imagining the story in a series of pictures is the way you plan your scenario, and the more you practice this visualization of scenes, the sooner will you be able to develop powerful situations.

After reading this material, it is a good plan to attend some good picture theatre bearing in mind the facts discussed in the *Screen Talk*, PRACTICAL STUDY AT THEATRES. See if you can recognize the points which were brought out in this Screen Talk and also see if you can recognize the *Close Up*, the *Dissolve* and other devices of action mentioned in the first chapter of the *Text Book*.

In studying the plays at the theatre, see if you can discover the methods used by the producer to emphasize the important points in the story. You should find yourself viewing the pictures with an entirely new outlook. The study of pictures from the inside is far more fascinating than viewing them in ignorance, and you will be able to appreciate many things that you never noticed before.

FIRST RECITATION

Part I. Answer the questions below. It is not necessary to copy out the questions. Simply number your answers to correspond to the questions and I will understand.

1. What is a photoplay?
2. What are two of the advantages of the photoplay as compared with the stage play?

3. What is the purpose of a *close-up*?
4. What is the purpose of a *dissolve*?
5. Why must a photoplay possess *plot*?
6. Why is training necessary to the writer of photoplays?
7. Should a photoplay be an accurate reflection of life?
8. What are two of the advantages to be gained by study at the theatre?

If there are any of the questions which you are not sure that you can correctly answer, do not allow this to delay your recitation. I take it for granted that you may make errors. If not you would have little need for my help. Send in your recitation in the most complete form possible and I will supply any information which you have missed.

Part II. Think up a plot which you consider suitable for a photoplay. Do not attempt to put it in photoplay form as you have not yet progressed far enough to do this. Write it out in your own language, in from 300 to 800 words, and send it to me for criticism.

The best size paper to use for your recitations is 8½ by 11. You can get paper this size at any stationery store, or directly from me, if you desire. However if you have no paper the correct size, *any size will do*. It is better to write on only one side of the sheet, but if you wish to save postage you may write on *both sides*. It is not necessary to typewrite your recitations unless you wish to do so. *Be sure to write plainly*, and leave a wide margin at the left for my corrections and criticisms. If you have any questions to ask, write them on a *separate* sheet, leaving space for me to answer your questions.

I am sending you envelopes of two sizes, one to use in mailing your recitation to me and the other to be enclosed *with* your recitation, bearing stamps for its return. You may use these envelopes if convenient, but if you lose them any other envelopes will do. Please do not forget to supply postage for the return of your recitations.

THE NEXT ASSIGNMENT

The next two Screen Talks, which will be sent to you in thirty days, are written for study in connection with the chapters in the Text-Book on plots and their development. They are writ-



ten by prominent producers, and as it is to the producers that you must sell your plots, these Screen Talks are of especial value to you at this time.

The first of these two Screen Talks, THE PRODUCER'S POINT OF VIEW, is by Mr. Lewis J. Selznick, Vice-President and General Manager of the World Film Corporation. Mr. Selznick is constantly called upon to make decisions as to what is most suitable for production, and what will be most acceptable to the public. The World Film Corporation releases only the very best grade of plays, and employs the most famous players. Some of their well-known recent releases are: Robert Warwick in THE DOLLAR MARK, Wilton Lackaye in THE PIT, Lew Fields in OLD DUTCH, Holbrook Blinn and Alice Brady in THE BOSS, Clara Kimball Young in HEARTS IN EXILE, Clara Kimball Young and Wilton Lackaye in TRILBY, and Beatriz Michelina in SALVATION NELL.

This Screen Talk tells what the producer is looking for in the way of plots, and shows the policy of the World Film Corporation and other companies in the production of photoplays, especially in the departments which affect the purchase of scenarios.

The second Screen Talk, WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS, is by Mr. F. C. McCarrahan, President of the United States Motion Picture Co. Mr. McCarrahan was formerly the General Manager of the George Kleine company, which produced the tremendous features, QUO VADIS, ANTHONY and CLEOPATRA, etc., and also produced many other well-known photoplays. Besides this he was formerly a director of the General Film Company, which releases the photoplays produced by the Vitagraph, Selig, Essanay and Lubin Companies.

These two Screen Talks contain authoritative material, *which never before has been offered to students of photoplay writing*. They are written especially for this course by men who study the tastes of the public with the utmost care. Nothing could be more useful to the student in beginning his work on plots than this up-to-date and accurate "Inside" information.

The development of plots is fascinating work, and I am sure that you will find the next assignment which contains these Screen Talks, *intensely interesting*.